

Letters of James W. Grimes

ISSN 0003-4827

No known copyright restrictions.

Recommended Citation

"Letters of James W. Grimes." *The Annals of Iowa* 22 (1941), 556-588.

Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0003-4827.6120>

Hosted by [Iowa Research Online](#)

LETTERS OF JAMES W. GRIMES

(Concluded From October, 1940)

Dr Kirkwood

I have just reced letters from Allemakee, Clayton &c. It is all trash about there being a particle of trouble in the north & it is not true that any part of our ticket will lose any strength in any of the northern counties. So far from it, there are strong hopes expressed by our friends that we shall make considerable gains in every county, I just saw an intelligent man from Marion County. He says the Hollanders are nearly all going with Scholte⁵³ and that we shall carry the county by as large a maj. as the democrats have usually done it viz 200. As evidence that the democrats surrender the county, they are going in for a peoples ticket. Dr. Walker was here yesterday from Ft. Madison & wanted me to speak once or twice in Lee County before the election, telling me that he had not the most remote doubt about the republicans carrying the county.

Kasson has written me that we shall be apt to lose votes in Davis Appanoose, Monroe, Lucas, Clark, Decatur & Wayne on account of the nomination of Rusch for Lieut. Gov. and wanting me to go out there before the election. In the first place, I am not conscious that I have a bit of influence out there & in the second place I do not believe there is much truth in the report. I do not doubt that in the counties named Rusch will run five to seven hundred votes behind his ticket, but that is nothing, he can very well afford to lose them, considering what we gain elsewhere through his name. And is it not strange that Americans, or nativists should be so anxious to run-under the very man who was most anxious to secure the passage of a registry law. Our friends are all speaking well of the noble manner in which Judge Edwards has acted & is acting in connection with this matter & with Lieut. Governorship. I think the consequence will be that he will be our candidate for Cong. next year. I have determined

⁵³Henry P. Scholte, leader of the emigrant group of Hollanders who settled at Pella, Iowa, in 1847, was formerly a Democrat, but changed his allegiance to the Republican party in 1859.

to favor his nomination all I can consistently with my position, for I think he deserves well of our party.

Every thing is cheering in every direction. We shall sweep the state by double our usual majority. I do not know & I cannot imagine a republican vote in Iowa that Dodge can secure, whilst *I do know* many democratic votes that he will lose. Our Judges will be scratched in different counties for local causes & so will theirs be, leaving the thing out about even, I guess. Write to me often, I reced. the letter from Dryden Smith giving the facts in relation to the Decorah Land office. You will hear further from that matter in due time.

Your friend, truly
James W. Grimes

29th July 1859

Dr Kirkwood

Yours from Ottumwa is at hand. No matter where Dodge may go, or how much it may be necessary to change your appointments to be with him you must not fail to keep by his side until the day of election, and if possible bring him around into the northern & more populous counties.

Keep him on the defensive, & see that he is well "stired up" all the time. Make him particularize in what I hid when I canvassed the state, (for I may wish to have something to say on that subject) and lead him on to abuse Harlan & myself just as much as possible. The more he flounders about in his abuse of others the better. Stick the division of the State question at him among other things.

The news is cheering from every quarter. We shall largely increase our majority of last year I am confident and without much extra exertion. The American question in the Southern tier is their great card to play. Write me in reply to this how you find things in Davis, Appanoose, Wayne, Decatur, Lucas & Clarke.

All is right in the north. You are finding Dodge to be as big a fool as I represented him to be, I think.

Your friend, truly
James W Grimes

Augst 2, 1859

Dr Kirkwood

I have attended to the fugitive slave business. Dodge will not make many points in the game from that thing. No news. Every thing is right all over the state. I had letters to-day from Wiltse, Woudson [?] & many others north. Vandever, Hamilton, &c are all going to take the stump.⁵⁴

Be sure to always get Dodge mad. Show him always to be a fool, as he is. You are going to have to get nearly over the whole state, or nearly so. Put in your best licks, our friends are jubilant wherever you have been.

Your friend

JWGrimes

Augst 5th 1859

Dr Kirkwood

We have now heard from all of the Counties that voted last year. except Carroll, Cherokee, Crawford, Dickinson, Monona, Plymouth & Sac which then gave 71 maj. for Sells Your majority as we count it up to this time is 3100 & will probably go to about 3200

You have got a difficult task before you for two years to navigate the ship of state without a cent of money. There is now due to the state from the several counties between three and four hundred thousand dollars and no taxes will be paid this year, for there is no money in the country to pay with. The government has got to be carried on principally upon credit. You must put on your thinking cap & begin to devise the ways & means of doing it.

We must abolish our present county system & give the *people* a change [sic] to govern themselves a little more than they do under the County Judge system. County officers should be paid by fees as formerly & the amt. paid should be decreased to onehalf of what it is now. These little naturalization machines in every County will never answer us. Send the County Judge to purgatory.

We must have a good, stringent registry law. There is no

⁵⁴William Vandever, surveyor and a leading military figure in the Civil War, was the elected Republican member of Congress, 1859-61, when he resigned to accept an army commission. Later served in Congress from California. W. W. Hamilton, railroad attorney in northern Iowa, member of the 5th and 6th state legislatures, was mentioned for lieutenant governor in 1859.

danger in passing such a law. We have hitherto been frightened about it. No man should vote within thirty days after being naturalized and no man should vote who had not been registered at least five days. If the republicans do not pass such a law next winter they ought not to have a majority in another legislature & I doubt very much if they will have.

There is a practice in this state of paying money from the Treasury without any appropriation being made & right in the face & eyes of the Constitution which declares that this shall not be done. For instance, the constitution or the law declares that a certain officer shall receive a certain salary. It has been the practice to audit & pay that amount to the officer upon the law affixing the salary & sometimes without a specific appropriation. The constitution declares that not a dollar shall be paid without this specific appropriation. I do not know that any wrong has been done under this practice. It has existed ever since the government was established. No evil could grow out of it as long as we retained our present state officers, but nonetheless, the practice should be checked as soon as you are inaugurated.

You will have trouble at the Penetentiary. It has always been a nuisance in the state & always will be. It would be too tedious to give you a history of the origin & progress of the trouble there. But keep them on a short allowance, & thus curb their unruly [?] spirits a little.

The asylum at Vinton ought not to have a cent—their is not a cent to spend, because there is no pressing demand for its completion & because there is no need for such a building as they are putting up.

Above all things else give us a registry law and abolish the country organization.

I leave for Washington in about three weeks. I hope you will not fail to write to me often, & keep me advised of what is going on in Iowa.

Yours truly
James W Grimes

Burlington Oct 25th 1859

Our democrats areed, mad & desperate (?). They expected to carry the state with money. They have spent their

money, they alienated personal friends, they have belittled themselves in their own estimation & have accomplished nothing by it. Dodge has not been seen for some days.

Burlington, Iowa, Oct. 27th 1859
(copy)

Dear Sir

Your favor of the 12th Sept. inviting me to furnish a short memoir of myself came duly to hand.

There are no events in my life worthy of record. I have done nothing to distinguish me above the great mass of my fellow men.

I was born in the town of Deering, Hillsboro County, New Hampshire, on the 20th Oct. 1816. My parents were John Grimes and Betsy Wilson, both of whom were born in the same town and both sprang from Scotch Irish parentage- the mother from the settlement at Londonderry N. H. and the father from a small band of Scotch Irish Presbyterians, who settled in Boston in the early part of the eighteenth Century. My father was a farmer. I am the youngest of a family of seven Children.

I was prepared for College at Hampton Academy N. H. then under the Charge of Rev. Roswell Harris, and entered Dartmouth College in August 1832,— remained in College two and a half years and then commenced the study of the law with James Walker Esqr. in Peterboro N. H. I settled in Burlington, then Michigan, afterwards Wisconsin & now Iowa, in May 1836, and have resided here ever since. The Territory of Iowa was created July 4th 1838, and at the first election in the month of August following I was elected a member of the first Genl. Assembly, and was Chairman of the Judiciary Committee in the House of Representatives, all laws for the new Territory passing through my hands. I have been several times since Elected to the Territorial & State Legislatures, though I have always been in a political minority in the County.

On the 9th Nov. 1846 I was married to Elizabeth Sarah Neally of Lee New Hampshire.

In August 1854 I was Elected Governor of Iowa for the term of four years.

In January 1858 [1859] I was Elected a Senator of the United States from the state of Iowa for the term of six years from the 4th March 1859.

I have done nothing & said nothing to justify you in placing my name in your book. I am only entitled to a place there, if at all, by the accident of my Election to the Senate.

You are at liberty to make what use you please with the foregoing facts, putting them, of course, into your own phraseology.

Wishing you the greatest possible success with your publication

I subscribe myself
Very truly your obdt. servt.
James W. Grimes

Rev. W. D. Haley
Washington

Washington, Nov. 30th 1859

Dr Kirkwood

Well, here I am boarding at your namesakes & relatives and living in a private house belonging to them just across the street from their hotel. They both appear to be very clever fellows & do every thing in the world to make me comfortable. Do you ever write to them? I do not doubt that they would be pleased to get a letter from Gov. Kirkwood.

Every thing here in relation to the organization of the House of Rep. is at sixes & sevens, though Sherman told me last evening that he felt quite confident of his election as Speaker of the House. I hope he may be elected & I am doing all I can to aid him, though of course my influence would amount to but very little. The two representatives from Iowa are for him & so are most of the men from Illinois & Wisconsin. All of our northwestern men ought to go for him for we have never had a Speaker from the northwest.

There never was such a fearful state of alarm as at this time prevails in that part of Virginia bordering on Pa. Every

sensible man knows that there is not a human being who will attempt or who has thought of attempting to rescue old Brown, yet Gov. Wise, for the advancement of his own selfish purposes in a political point of view, has marched his troops up & down the state and has so played upon the fears & prejudices [?] of the people that they are actually beside themselves with dread.⁵⁵ But day after to-morrow, when they hang old Brown, their fears will probably be relieved.

I suppose you are about this time cogitating over your inaugural.

I want you to write to me often from Iowa City & let me know what goes on there

Your friend, truly,
James W. Grimes.

Washington Dec. 26th 1859

Dr Kirkwood

Your favor is at hand. The cadets at the Military & Naval Academies are selected from each representative district by the Member of the House & the Senators have nothing to do with them. I think there is no vacancy from your district, but I will show your letter to Vandever. I wrote you a few days ago on a subject about which I feel some interest. I trust that you & Dr. B. will be able to assure me that all my fears are groundless.

The State Convention soon assembles to appoint delegates to the Chicago Convention. Do not let the delegates be instructed & send men who are not mere traders in politics. You ought to be one of the delegates & I hope you will see to it that you are appointed. I would select a goodly number to cast the vote of Iowa.

If you appoint electors I would suggest Saml Miller of Keokuk & Wilson of Fairfield. They are both efficient canvassers & would help our congressional & state candidates a good deal. We must have a thorough canvass of the state next year & bring our majority up to six or eight thousand. Have good men appointed delegates & have them divided fairly between old whigs & old democrats, & entirely un-

⁵⁵John Brown, the abolitionist agitator, well known in Iowa due to his trips and visitations there.

committed to every [?] one—men who will try to nominate for the good of the party & not for the benefit of themselves. Why dont' you write.

Yours
James W Grimes

The enclosed is from Gov. Wise of Va. & shows his view of the discriminations in favor of slave property contained in the Kansas-Nebraska bill for which Gen. Dodge voted & of which vote he boasts. I wrote you this morning I have several letters from various quarters. Every thing is as it should be all over the state so far as I can learn. I am praising the diligent stimulating the lazy, advising those who are willing to labor, and doing the best I can to set all our squadrons in the field as they should be brought.

I am very anxious that you should put the General through his paces in the northern & central counties

Yours
Grimes

[S. J. Kirkwood]

(Private)

Dr Kirkwood.

I think it is fully settled in the minds of our republican friends that you are to be our candidate for Gov. There is no one talked of at all, save you & Lowe & our friends are pretty much all for you, so far as I can learn.

Your deference to the feelings, enmity and declarations of Mr. W. Penn Clarke is all very nice & chivalric, but you must remember that you must defer somewhat to the feelings & opinions of your friends also. If you prefer to hold off, with a view to another office, very well: I cannot advise you in relation to that. But, I must say that you ought not to hold back out of respect to a man who always has been and always will be bitterly hostile to you, thus disregarding the wishes of a vast majority of your friends. I hope therefore you will say to every one who approaches you on the subject, that you are not clamorous, or importunate for the office, but that you are in the hands of your party friends & will take the nomination, if it be tendered to you.

The democrats are in a very bad way, indeed, for candidates. Dodge will not be their man, & they have no one except drunken Bill Leffingwell, for Samuels, Fisher, Johnston all decline.⁵⁶ Besides, there is bound to be a split among them. The Douglass & Buchanan parties are irreconcilable. The Douglass men are resolved to denounce Buchanan & the administration in their state convention & if they do, the Buchanan men will organize in opposition.

They are quite as badly off for candidates for Judges. Who on earth have they? J. C. Hall,⁵⁷ who gets drunk every day & fell down a pair of stairs a few days ago in that condition, is the favorite candidate. God only knows where the other two are to come from. Take it all in all, there was never before this such miserably besotted, demoralized party as is the present democratic party in this state & nation. The Gazette in this place is *defunct* after an existence of twenty two years. It will probably be revived, but how? when? & by whom? no one knows. This, in a democratic county, indicates the condition of the party.

Your friend, truly
James W. Grimes

Washington, Jany 25 1860

Dr Kirkwood

I am not able to pronounce judgement on your inaugural for I have not see it, but I have seen democratic comments on it & from those, judge it to be a production alike creditable to you and damaging to them. I think I have now some reason to believe that that the democratic bitterness will hereafter be turned from me and —— [hurled?] at you & so far as this may be the effect of your address I certainly have cause to be gratified. Why does not some one send me a copy of it?

⁵⁶William E. Leffingwell, Democratic leader in Iowa, was member of the 1, 3, 4 state legislatures, and was several times the unsuccessful Democratic candidate for state and congressional office; Benj. M. Samuels, Democratic leader of Dubuque, was member of the 5th state legislature, and was the party's unsuccessful candidate for governor in 1857; Maturin L. Fisher, member of the state legislature, superintendent of public instruction, was later a commissioner for the construction of the present state house; Ed Johnston of Keokuk, was an early prominent member of the party, member of the 2, 3, 4, territorial legislatures.

⁵⁷J. C. Hall, judge of the state supreme court in 1854, served in the 8th general assembly as a Democrat.

I do not believe that there will be an organization of the House of Rep before the Charleston Convention which assembles on the 25th April next. About forty of the extreme gulf state men are open & avowed disunionists & want the government to run down like an old clock for want of winding & repairs. Another set do not want to vote for or against the admission of Kansas until after the democratic nominee shall be selected and the President & his retainers are unwilling that it should be organized at all under a republican speaker.

The President is playing into the hands of the disunionists all of the time, as was evidenced by his appointment of Faulkner⁵⁸ to the Mission to France. The truth is, we are gradually approaching a rupture. All northern men, democrats as well as others are being driven out of the South, and that whole section is giving loose rein to the most boisterous passions & thereby relapsing into a state of barbarism. There is almost a perfect nonintercourse between members here, socially [?] and northern men must in the very nature of things begin to look with indifference upon a union with barbarism & violence [?] & shame.

I cant' believe that the republicans will abandon Sherman⁵⁹. I *know* that some of them will not do so if the House remains unorganized until the 4th March 1861.

Yours very truly

James W. Grimes

Washington, Feb. 25th 1860

Dr Kirkwood

Yours of the 17th inst. is at hand. I have a copy of Gov. Letchers⁶⁰ message about you— & will send it in a day or two. It has been intimated to me that Toombs⁶¹ intends to attack you to-morrow & if so I intend to speak just six words in reply to him & in defense of you— I corrected him a few weeks ago in regard to his statements about Iowa & my

⁵⁸Charles J. Faulkner, of Virginia. He was subsequently appointed to the "French mission."

⁵⁹John Sherman of Ohio.

⁶⁰Governor Letcher of Virginia severely denounced Gov. Kirkwood of Iowa for failing to honor a warrant for the arrest of Barclay Coppie of Springdale, a member of Brown's Harper Ferry raiders.

⁶¹Robert Toombs of Georgia, representative and Senator from 1845-61.

manner was intentionally rather defiant. He says he is coming back at me some time— told Mr. Simmons of R. I. so, & he has the floor to-morrow, but I do not know for what purpose.

We are doing nothing here— Congressional life & Congressional honors are a humbug.

Yours truly
James W. Grimes

Washington March 12th 1860

Dr Kirkwood

Your message in regard to Coppie⁶² has not reached me though I saw your ——— of the Senate some days ago, which was just & right. I presume your message will reach me in a few days.

You ask if I have been sick. I was sick for a month after I got here & then, about a month ago I dislocated my right thumb so that I was disabled from writing. This is very dull business—I am heartily sick & tired of it. Douglass is a “dead dog” politically. Breckenridge will be nominated at Charleston, I think. That is the general impression at present. Seward will probably be the republican nominee

Your friend, truly
James W. Grimes

Dr Gov.

I am importuned every day & annoyed by letters to address the people in various parts of the State. I suppose I will have to make a few speeches. Suppose we advertise to speak before the election in say ten places together.

Say Du Buque, Cedar Rapids, West Union, Washington, Ottumwa, Centerville, Winterset, Des Moines, Muscatine, Fort Madison, or if these places do not suit you name some others. “Barker’s is willing”

Yours truly
James W. Grimes

[1860?]

⁶²Barclay Coppie, one of two Iowa members of Brown’s raiders.

Washington Jan'y 9, 1861

Dr Sir

I did not at first understand your telegraphic dispatch. Hence the answer we sent. We have appeared in the convention as delegates, & shall act. The congressional delegation from Maine will also present themselves this morning.

I learn from Hoxie,^{62a} now here, that Warren intends to be a candidate for Gov. next summer if he does not go into the cabinet. What did you learn at Springfield as to this latter matter?

Yours truly
J W Grimes

[S. J. Kirkwood]

Washington, Jan 28, 1861.

My Dear Sir ^{63a}

Your esteemed favor of the 17th inst. has reached me.

There appears to be a general misunderstanding in the public mind as to the present condition of affairs at the Capital of the nation, and especially in relation to the demands of the disunionists upon the Union men of the North. I find that the impression prevails quite extensively that the 'Crittenden proposition,' as it is called, is simply a re-establishment of the Missouri Compromise line. This is very far from the truth.

Mr. Crittenden proposes to extend the lines of 36 deg. 30 min. through to the Pacific ocean, and to agree by Constitutional provision to protect and defend slavery in all of the Territory of the United States South of that line. Nor is this all. *He now proposes that this protection to Slavery shall be extended to all Territory that may hereafter be acquired South of that line.* The sum and substance of the whole matter is we are asked for the sake of peace, to surrender all of our cherished ideas on the subject of slavery, and agree, in effect, to provide a slave code for the Territories south of 36 deg. 30 min. and for the Mexican provinces as soon as they shall be brought within our jurisdiction. It is demanded of

^{62a}H. M. Hoxie, Secretary of the Republican State Central Committee, was later appointed U. S. Marshal for Iowa by Lincoln.

^{63a}Hon. Sam. J. Kirkwood, Gov. Iowa, in *Fort Dodge Republican*, Feb. 26, 1861.

us that we shall consent to change the Constitution into a genuine pro-slavery instrument, and to convert the government into a great slave-breeding, slavery-extending empire.

Every man blessed with ordinary foresight must see what would be the inevitable and almost immediate consequence of the adoption of this provision as a part of the Constitution. It would disclose itself to be the very reverse of a measure of peace. Raids would at once begin upon the provinces of Mexico; war would ensue; the annexation of Sonora, Chihuahua, Cohahuila, Nuevaleon, Tamaulipas and other provinces would follow; they would be converted, at the instant of their acquisition, from free into slave Territories, and ultimately be admitted into the Union as slave States.—Much as I love peace and seek to pursue it I am not prepared to pay this price for it. Let no man in Iowa imagine for a moment that the Crittenden proposition is for the mere restoration for the Compromise line of 1820. It is simply and truly the *application* of the Breckinridge platform to all Territory now acquired or *hereafter to be acquired* south of 36 deg. 30 minute, and would result, if adopted, in the acquisition and adoption of new Slave States for the ostensible purpose of restoring what is called the equilibrium of the sections. The restoration of the Missouri Compromise line has been offered to the disunionists and contemptuously rejected. Their maxim is “rule or ruin.”

I confes [sic] that I look with amazement upon the course of Northern sympathizers with the disunionists. Six years ago they insisted to break down a compromise of thirty-four years standing, and defended their action by what they claimed to be the right of the people to determine for themselves what should be the character of their domestic institutions. There was much plausibility in their argument. They made a party creed of it. Now, after the lapse of six short years, they have become so pro-slavery in their opinions that they are willing to ignore the past and recognize and protect slavery in the very country which they boasted that their own act had made free.

There are other provisions in the Crittenden resolutions which to my mind are wholly inadmissible, but let them pass.

My objection is to any compromise. I will never consent to compromises or to the imposition of terms upon me or the people I represent under threats of breaking up the government. I will "not give reasons under compulsion." No surer or more effectual way could be devised for converting this into a revolutionary Government than the adoption of a compromise expedient at this time.

Eight months ago the four political parties of this country, in their several Conventions, announced cer [tain] abstract propositions in their platforms which, each believed to be true, and which if acted upon, wo'd in their opinions, most conduce to the prosperity of the whole country. The issues of these propositions was submitted to the people through the ballot boxes. One party was successful, as either might have been but for the lack of votes, and now one of the vanquished parties seeks to overthrow the Government because they were not themselves the victors and will only consent to stay their work of demolition upon the condition that we will agree to make their platform, which is abhorrent to us, a part of the Constitution of the country. After taking their chances for success, and being defeated in a fair and manly contest, they now seek to overthrow the government under which they live and to which they owe allegiance. How rapidly they are following in the footsteps of the Governments of Mexico and South America?

I do not believe the the public mind is now in a condition to calmly consider the great questions involved in the amendments proposed. But suppose the people were willing and anxious that such amendments to the Constitution should be submitted to them; suppose they were in proper frame of mind to weigh them and decide upon their adoption; suppose their adoption was not attempted to be enforced by threats, can we have any assurance that this is the last demand to be made upon us? Can we be certain that success in this instance will not whet the appetite for new concessions and new demands, and that similar threats of secession and revolution will not succeed every future Presidential election? Will the demand for new guarantees stop here? Shall we not be as liable to have our trade paralyzed, our finances deranged,

our National Flag insulted, the public property wrested from us and destroyed, and the Government itself overthrown four years hence, if we amend the Constitution, as we should be if we now stand firmly by our principals and uphold the authority of the government?

The question before the country, it seems to me, has assumed gigantic proportions. It has become something more than the issue on the slavery question growing out of the construction of the Constitution. The issue now before us is whether we have a country—whether or not this is a nation. Is this a Government which Florida, with 80,000 people, can destroy by resolving herself out of the Union and seizing the forts and arsenals within her borders? That is a question for our decision. Can a great and prosperous nation of 33,000,000 of people be destroyed by an act of secession by some of its members? Florida and her sister revolutionary States answer in the affirmative. We deny it. They undertake to act upon their professed belief and secede, or as I term it, rebel against the Government. While they were in this attitude of rebellion, a compromise is presented to us for adoption by which it is proposed, not to punish the rebellious States but to entice them back into the Union. Who does not see that by adopting these compromise propositions we tacitly recognize the right of these States to secede? Their adoption at this time wo'd completely demoralize the Government, and leave it to the power of any State to destroy it. If Florida and South Carolina can secede because the Government declines to adequately protect her iron and coal interest, or New England because her manufactures, or New York because her commerce is not sufficiently protected? I could agree to no compromise until the right to secede was fully renounced, because it wo'd be a recognition of the right of one or more States to break up the Government at their will.

Iowa has a peculiar interest in this question. If this right of State revolution be conceded, her geographical position is such as to place her completely in the power of revolutionary States. Will she agree that one State can secede and take from her the mouth of the Mississippi river, that another can take from her the mouth of the Missouri, and that others

shall be permitted to deprive her of the right of passage to the Atlantic ocean? If she will not agree to this, it becomes her people to insist that the Constitution of the country shall be upheld, that the laws of the land be enforced, and that this pretended right of a State to destroy our National existence shall be sternly and emphatically rebuked. I know the people of Iowa well enough to believe that appeals to their magnanimity, if not successful, will be kindly received and considered, whilst appeals of their fears will pass by them as the idle wind, and that they will risk all things, and endure all things in maintaining the honor of the National flag and in preserving the National Union.

One word more and I close this letter, already too long. At the commencement of the session, before revolution had assumed its present gigantic proportions, before any State had pretended to secede except South Carolina, before the forts and arsenals of the United States had been captured, the flag of the country fired upon and the Capital and the nation threatened, I assented, as a member of the Senatorial Committee of Thirteen, to three propositions, which were to the following effect, viz:

1st. That Congress shall never be permitted to interfere with the domestic institutions of any State, or to abolish slavery therein.

2d. That the several States should be advised to review their legislation in regard to persons of color, and repeal or modify all such laws as might conflict with the Constitution of the United States or with any of the laws of Congress made in pursuance thereof.

3d. To admit Kansas into the Union under the Wyandotte Constitution, and then to admit the remaining territory belonging to the United States as two States, one north and one south of the parallel of 36 deg. 30 min., with the provision that these States might be subdivided and new ones erected therefrom whenever there should be sufficient population for one Representative in Congress upon sixty thousand square miles.

These propositions, if adopted, would have quieted the apprehensions of the Southern people as to the intention of

the people of the Free States to interfere with Slavery in the States, and would have finally disposed of all the territory belonging to the Government. They would have made two very inconvenient States, but they would have settled a very inconvenient question. They would have been adopted without any surrender of principle by anybody or any section, and therefore without any party and personal humiliation. But they were spurned by the Disunionists. They preferred to plunge the country into revolution, and they have done it. It only remains for us now to obey and enforce the laws and show to the world that this Government is strong enough to protect itself from rebellion within as well as from assault without.

The issue now made up for the decision of the people of this country is between law, order, the Union and the Constitution, on the one hand, the revolution, anarchy, dissolution and bloodshed on the other. I do not doubt as to the side you and the people of Iowa will occupy in this contest.

I am, very truly

Your obedient servant,

James W. Grimes.

Washington Dec- 17, 1861

My dear Sir

I assure you that I have not forgotten you- I reced a letter from you last spring written whilst you was in Colorado which I answered at once, but I judge from yours now before me that you never received it.

I will do all I can for Dr. Pease. Todd⁶⁴ controuls all the appointments west of Iowa & we may not succeed, but whatever is in my power shall be freely done.

I have mailed some books to you to day. I shall submit your letter in regard to Colorado matters to the Secty of War.

Yours truly

James W Grimes

[C. C. Carpenter]

⁶⁴John Blair Smith Todd, delegate to Congress from Dakota Territory.

Washington Dec. 15, 1862

Private

Dr Sir

We have about half way had the offer of the resident mission to Denmark for our state. The salary is \$7500, residence Copenhagen. It is not certain that the place can be secured, but we, at present, think it may be.

Do you wish the place if we can secure it, or will you accept it? If not, who do you advise be proposed from Iowa, if we can get it. Answer at once & by telegraph. Yours truly

James W. Grimes

Jas. Harlan

James F. Wilson

[S. J. Kirkwood]

My dear Sir

I beg leave to introduce to your acquaintance the bearer hereof Dr Charles Kessman [?] of New York. Mr. Kessman is a prominent w—— in New York City & is highly recommended to me by my friends.

I commend him to your attention

Your obdt. servt.

J. W. Grimes

Washington, Feb. 16th 1863

Messrs. Fessenden & Sherman

Senators

Burlington March 31, 1863

Dr Gov

I have just reced a letter from a mutual [friend] of ours which contains this expression, "I am pleased with the appointment of Gov. Kirkwood & can divine the cause of his removal out of the United States. Strokes of *cute* policy always win on the political board. Whatever may be thought of Gov. K. by his enemies, it is certain that if he accepts the appointment, the live, sincere element of the republic will be represented at Denmark." This admonishes me that I have not written you since your appointment, & that the reasons

for making it are open to misconstruction. I am vain enough to like to be regarded "*smart*" but I do not for — a reputation for that character of smartness indicated by this extract.

You know very well how you came to be mentioned in connection with this mission for we told you all about it at Washington. When you told us that you had concluded to decline it, the matter was suffered to drop right there & was never thought of afterwards. To secure such places requires such strenuous & persistent effort I did not believe it necessary to notify the President of your determination & the matter entirely passed out of my mind. When suddenly the nomination came to us at the extra session of the Senate, and altho I was satisfied that you did not intend to accept the place, I thought that [to] have your name [withdrawn] after it was announced would cause misapprehension & that the better way would be to have a confirmation & then, if you chose, you could have the credit of resigning. Such, in a word is the whole history of the matter & thus, I presume, you already understand it.

I am once more at home & am most happy to be here. What is doing about our approaching state election? Who are to be our candidates & upon what platform?

Yours truly

J. W. Grimes

[S. J. Kirkwood]

(Strictly private)

Burlington Augt. 10. 1863

Dr Gov-

I reced. two letters last night each saying that there was a scheme on foot to run Warren against me for the Senate, making a coalition between the democrats & some of his retainers [?] No such thing can be carried into execution for very many reasons & I doubt if any such exists. I know how suspicious men are apt to be about matters of this kind & particularly in such inflamible times as these. But I would like to know if the project really has an existence. Have you

heard any thing of it or seen or heard anything that impressed you with the idea that it might be so. I learn that W's. friends are trying to secure as many senators as possible. Let me hear from you.

This in confidence
Your friend,
J. W. Grimes

[S. J. Kirkwood]

Burlington, Oct. 19, 1863

My dear Sir.

I will certainly render you all the aid I can in the direction you indicate. I did so before & was not aware that the printing had been taken from you until you so wrote me. I think it is due to you that it should be returned to you.

We have not merely beaten the so-called democratic party in this state, we have destroyed it.

Yours truly
J. W. Grimes

Washington Dec. 10th 1863

Dear Gov.

I have sent you the books you desired to your address at Iowa City. I was told to day at the war office that you could re-appoint Col. Merrill [?] as Col. of his regiment & I asked the Adj. Genl. to put that in writing which he agreed to do by to morrow.

I think that the Nonpareil business at Council Bluffs proceeds from the anxiety of Mr. Bell⁶⁶ the member from that county to secure the public printing for that paper of which he is one half owner. I have no idea that it will amount to much, though I judge from letters of his that have been sent to me that he is ready for a trade on almost any terms in order to accomplish his purpose. He is the only man elected by our friends of whom I have heard anything that would indicate opposition to me. But you can judge better of this than I can. I do not think that K. had any thing to do with

⁶⁶Andrew J. Bell, of Council Bluffs, member of the 10th General Assembly.

this mater. The presidents message is almost universally acceptable. I object to nothing in it save the implied admission that the Supreme court may overrule his proclamation. Let me hear from you soon & often.

Your friend

J. W. Grimes

[S. J. Kirkwood]

Washington Jany 30th 1864

Dr Gov.

Yours of the 20th inst. enclosing the resignation of the mission to Denmark came duly to hand & I deposited it in the hands of the secty.

What you say about election this year is the very thing I suggested to you when I last saw you at my house. Of course I am for it & I can imagine that there can be no controversy about your being selected.

I accept your kind congratulations at my re-election. I cannot feel otherwise than grateful & proud of the result. For your aid, so efficient & so disinterested in my behalf, receive my thanks

Your friend, truly

J. W. Grimes

United States Senate Chamber.

Washington, Apr 27 1864

Hon John Sherman

Dr Sir

This will will [sic] serve to introduce to you John Bettman Esq. a citizen of Iowa, once a citizen of Ohio & now a clerk in the Treasury department

Mr. Bettman is one of the leading Germans in this country a man of integrity ability & great worth.

I commend him to your consideration

Your obdt, servt.

J. W. Grimes

Fairfield, Iowa,
Aug. 22, 1864.

Sir:⁶⁵

The bearer hereof waits upon you for the purpose of securing your approval of the Sioux City and Pacific Railroad Company, which has been organized for the purpose of Constructing the Sioux City branch of the Pacific railroad, in accordance with the act of Congress.

This company fairly and impartially represents the different railway interests involved in the Sioux City connection with the Union Pacific road, as I believe. It thus harmonises the various interests and unites them all in a common effort to give all the effect to the legislation of Congress.

I trust that your approval will be given to this company, as it is without any rival, and is satisfactory to all concerned.

Yours truly,

James F. Wilson

James W. Grimes

His Excelency, A. Lincoln,
President of the United States.

Burlington July 23d 1865

Dr Sir

I have duly reced. your favor of the 6th inst. sent to Washington & thence forwarded to me here.

I would be pleased to assist me [sic] if you can tell me how I can do it. The position of Clerk to the Comtee. on Naval Affairs is filled, to the satisfaction of the members of the Comtee. I think & I do not know any reason why the person holding the appointment should be displaced

I would advise you to apply to Mr. Harlan who now has a large patronage & if you desire it I will write him in your behalf, but I would advise you to first determine what place to apply for.

Yours obdt. Servt.

J. W. Grimes

[?]

⁶⁵ In *Sioux City Register*, May 19, 1866.

(Private)

Burlington, Sept. 27, 1865

Dr. Goy,

Harlan is here though I have not seen him. I am inclined to believe, from what I learn, that he wants the long term, that Warren wants the short term & that they will make a *diabler* to that effect, or that H. will take the long term & get W. a mission to Europe in place of the mission to Central America.

I think it of vast importance that you go into Allison's district before election.

Yours

Grimes

(Private)

Oct. 4, 65

Dr. Goy,

I am not sure that there is to be an elect on the part of the gentleman named to secure the long term. I have discovered no evidence of it since I wrote you. I hear from all quarters that you are the "coming man" & I think there can be no trouble about your election, but it is best to make assurance doubly sure, and hence I advise you to see every member possible, and not only secure their pledges but prepare their minds to resist the machinations of U. H. W. who will be sure to propose all sorts of *tricks & diablers* with every body. I am inclined to think that he will strive for the short term as a military necessity and to accomplish that end will strike hands with the diabler himself. Make no trade with any mortal. The people are for you for both the long & short term and insist upon having both.

I have done and am doing precisely what you suggest I should do.

Do not fail to have a *large outside delegation* of your friends at Des Moines at the commencement of the session to remain until the election, and *let as many of them be military men as possible*. Don't fail in this.

Yours truly

J. W. Grimes

Oct. 4, 1865

(Private)

Burlington Oct. 12th 1865

Dr Governor.

Our county gives Stone between 200 & 250 maj. & we elect our whole ticket, which under the circumstances & considering the weights we carried was doing very well. better indeed than I expected.

It is now *quite certain* that Mr. Harlan is a candidate for re-election to the Senate for the long term. It is so given out by authority. I suppose you have heard that the Hawkeye has been bought by Bardsly, Postmaster at Oskaloosa & proprietor of the Herald & Edwards also Postmaster at Mt Pleasant & proprietor of the Home Journal. They paid a large price (\$17,000) and the understanding is that it was bought in Harlan's interest, both the proprietors are Methodists & the Methodist church is his strong card & always has been.

No one can tell how Warren will be, but the three representatives were pledged to you before election - two of them I think may be relied on under any circumstances, of the other I have my fears.

Now my good friend, "*stir your stumps*" & go into view. I have no hostility to Harlan. I advised him not to leave the Senate, but when he did leave it & voluntarily pledged himself to you & thus induced you to become a candidate for his succession I think fair play entitles you to the place.

Yours truly

J. W. Grimes

(Private)

Burlington Oct 20, 1865

Dear Gov.

Warren has gone to Washington to perfect the arrangement that some of his friends give out is to be carried into fruition at Des Moines, at least such is the inference. I find that he has promised the Wardenship of the Penitentiary to one man & I presume it is already promised to a dozen other patriots who are expected to use some influence

in his behalf and will be pledged before the first of January to a hundred & fifty others.

I have no idea that you can be defeated, but it is as well to leave no stone unturned that you can upturn as well as not.

Morrill⁶⁶ of Me. wrote me yesterday that it was rumored at Washington that Harlan would leave the cabinet & that he had been to Iowa to see what the chances were for his old seat. [illegible] *sot*

Yours truly
J. W. Grimes

Burlington Oct. 28, 1865

Dr Gov.

Yours of the 24th inst. is reced. with enclosures. The indications now are that Harlan will not leave the cabinet. Johnson is acting better since the Oct. Election & will not be so desirous of getting rid of him & some others & Harlan evidently thinks so for he has just bought one of the very best houses in Washington & paid \$30,000 for it. It seems to me that he would have hardly made so large an investment in property of that kind if he had not felt that he had a pretty long lease on office in Washington. Warren has gone to Washington to see him & try to cook up some devilty with him, but Nourse's⁶⁷ letter, for Nourse is his right hand man, gives me more assurance that he can be induced to go into no such arrangement than any thing I have seen.

I would like a Colleague through the month of Dec. Tho nothing is ever done that month, but owing principally to Stone's unpopularity I doubt if I would want to be appointed by him. The state wont suffer *very much* if it has only one Senator that month & if no appointment is made, there will be that place to give to Harlan in the event you spoke of, whereas you would dislike to go there thirty days & be superseeded by some one else at the end of that time even if you should be elected for the long term.

I think you & Nourse [?] are right about allowing Harlan

⁶⁶Lot Myrick Morrill, Senator from Maine.

⁶⁷C. C. Nourse, a Whig-Republican leader in Iowa, twice attorney general of the state, and a district court judge.

to fill out his own term should he be thrust out by Johnson, though I am satisfied that he (Harlan) *now* expects to remain

Yours truly

J. W. Grimes

Burlington, Nov. 14, 1865

Dr Gov.

I have yours of the 7th inst. & reenclose Deerings⁶⁸ [?] letter as you desire. I have like Nourse reced. a letter (private) from Harlan saying his friends urged him to be a candidate & wanting a frank answer as to what I thought of it. I gave it to him, telling that after he determined to go into the cabinet I committed myself to you as did very many of his best friends and that you thought he was also committed to you. I told him exactly what I thought about it, though I suspect it will do no good for he evidently wanted me to urge him to run. Sells, you know, holds a valuable office under him. The Washington sentiment on the subject is all nonsense & limited to a few clerk [sic] who were appointed under the influence of members of the Iowa delegation.

Yours truly

J. W. Grimes

United States Senate Chamber,
(Private)

Washington, Dec. 2d 1865

Dr Gov.

I have recd your favors & shall on Monday hand the longer letter to Mr. Harlan, though I am satisfied that no good will come of it. He evidently has his heart set upon being returned to the Senate & is moving heaven & earth to accomplish that object. I have let him know exactly what I think about it. Sells & two or three Methodist preachers are traversing the state in his behalf at this moment. Between us he seems to be beside [?] himself. He has bought a house in this city at \$30,000. It will require not less than \$10,000 to furnish it, he has a magnificent carriage [?] etc. on the way from New York with all the accompanymnts & I am told

⁶⁸Nathaniel Cobb Deering, close political friend of James Harlan, held several minor positions through Harlan's influence, and served in Congress from Iowa, 1877-1883.

that it will require \$20,000 per annum to support his establishment, it certainly cant' be done under \$15,000 a year. My fears are that a rally being made of the Methodist Church in his behalf it may eventuate in a split of our party, but should that be so, I cannot but regard Harlan as responsible for it. I regret this *imbroglio* very much for I have always been & am yet a friend of Harlan, and under ordinary circumstances would support him, but I could not honorably do it were I in Iowa after what occurred between us last spring.

I think Warren cant' be a candidate for he has drawn a part of his pay, —Some seven or eight hundred dollars as a minister to Goutumolo. The contest will be confined to you & Harlan. I do not know what you are doing, but he is leaving no stone unturned

I do not wish you to use any thing in this letter as coming from me.

Yours truly
J. W. Grimes

United States Senate Chamber.
Washington, Dec 7th 1865 (Private)

Dear Governor

I understand that the Interior Department ticket for Iowa politics is Warren for the short term & Harlan for the long term. I am told, I know not how much truth there may be in the report, that all the applic [aions?] to that end are to be brought to bear that the patronage of that department can bring.

Sells is now in Iowa in aid of Harlans election. I do not know whether his son Wm. H. is there or in the Indian country where, it is reported to me he has a trading post & two or three contracts.

Warren has drawn one months pay as minister to Goutumola some \$700 or \$800, as I was told by Gen. Cowie [?] who paid it to him as a clerk in the 5th Auditors office.

About one half of Mount Pleasant is in the Interior Department & all at work rallying the Methodists to the support of Harlan.

Darwin⁹⁹ was notified before I left Burlington that a Judgeship in Washington on Dec — was open for him, he might select which he pleased. Still, there is no telling what Darwin may do or who he may vote for.

Do not use this or mention of any of these facts as coming from me, as it is written in strict confidence & to put you on your guard. You cant' labor too hard between this & the election

Yours truly
J. W. Grimes

(Private)

Washington Dec 16, 1865

Dr Gov.

The Paymaster of the Army told Wilson today that he had yesterday given leave of absence to two Paymasters at Mr. Harlans request viz. T. H. Stanton of Washington & Wm. Penn Clark of Iowa City. They are to go to Iowa to assist the Genl. Assembly to elect Senators. I presume you will see at Des Moines a swarm of fellows from the Interior when the legislature makes ready to hear testimony to what they denominate the sentiment of Washington on the subject of the senatorial election.

Tell me what you think of the contest as it now stands Have your chances lessened any?

Yours truly
J. W. Grimes

(Private)

Dr Gov.

I enclose you a letter of Cowie to show you what is said in Washington.

It really does not seem to me that Harlan would agree to this arrangement. It would be asking a little too much to take two senators from our town & another from an adjoining County.

If it were necessary to have a military hero one *could* be got who was not so innocent of rebel blood as W[arren] is.

Yours truly
J. W. Grimes

⁹⁹Charles Ben Darwin of Burlington, a member of the 11th general assembly.

My dear Sir

I had not intended to go to the Convention and cant' very well go for divers reasons; But you ought to go I would say. At any rate I can see no reason why you should not go & your presence under some circumstances might be of importance I do not anticipate any trouble about the platform. So far as I know there is great unanimity of opinion on that subject in this part of the state. For my own part, I am inclined to make sure that the rebellion is closed out, which can only be done by united council [?] action, before I am willing to see the party split to pieces by new forceful, or ——— issues. Hence the less said in the platform the better, let it be fealty [?] to the government, support of the administration, economy in expenditures, for cardinal principles & all will be well.

I have inquired of many men whom I have casually met who was to be senator in place of Mr. Harlan & in every instance the response has been Gov. K- Is that the conclusion at which you have arrived? Indeed, most of those with whom I have conversed say that no one can make a show of a contest. But you have taken a close view of the field doubtless & know far better than I possibly can what the prospects are.

Yours truly

J. W. Grimes

[S. J. Kirkwood]

(Private)

United States Senate Chamber,
Washington, Jany 2 1866

Dr Gov.

Yours of the 29th ultimo is at hand. I had no idea that Rich⁷⁰ had gone to Iowa until I recd. your letter & thought he was in Philada. The delegation in Cong. stand about this way. All are against Harlan. All but Kasson were for you when last heard from, but each one of them has a hankering for the place himself & fancies that in some event or other he may be the possible man. But no one of them gives attention to any ambitions aspiration & when they left here all

⁷⁰Jacob Rich. *See* *Annals of Iowa*, Vol. 1, p. 100.

professed to be friendly to you with the exception before stated, though no one of them cares to speak very loud on the subject on account of the tremendous patronage of the Interior Department.

It is amusing to read the Iowa Harlan newspapers. So far from the Department being forced upon him, he sought it & he desired me to urge his appointment upon the Presdt. I did so urged every possible reason for it & it was to me that the Presdt. made the promise that he should be appointed. It was when I communicated to him the Presdts. reply that he told me he & his friends would support you for his successor. I am now reluctantly constrained to believe that he never intended to do so & that he only desired a place in the cabinet in order to strengthen himself for a re-election by its patronage. There are divers facts all tending to draw me to this conclusion. I confess myself deceived in Harlan. I always thought him a straight forward, guileless man of fair ability & of respectable standing, who, though he might not do any extraordinarily wise things, would not do any very foolish things. He is now the topic of conversation here. He has bought & *paid* \$30,000 for a house, it has not cost less than \$12,000 to 15,000 to furnish it & it will cost \$20,000 a year to support it. Every one is asking how Harlan became rich so suddenly & the inquiry is accompanied by all sorts of grimaces, winks, nods & gestures. But all these things & many others you have heard from others.

The idea that is attempted to be propagated that he is not a candidate from choice but is made such by his friends is the worst nonsense in the world. You of course understood that. It is due to Harlan that I should say that I do not believe him, notwithstanding all that is said about him here just now, to be a dishonest man. In my opinion his wife, has been, playing the fool & betraying him into follies that his own judgement must condemn. I hear it said that she has been speculating with cotton agents & as their partner & I am inclined to think it to be so. Sell has been here four or five weeks but carefully avoided me. His son is deeply interested in Indian Contracts in his superintendency it is charged & not denied. Cooley [?] professes to have insisted that he

should withdraw from the partnership, but he is doubtless as much interested as ever. I think Wilson takes the same view that you do. I shall show him your letter when you return.

Yours truly

J. W. Grimes

United States Senate Chamber.
Washington, Jan'y 7, 1866

Dear Governor

Wilson has just returned to Washington & I have handed him your letter to read. He has no idea of being a candidate against you & authorized me to say so to you. All of the members in Cong. from Iowa so far as I can learn are of the opinion that Harlan ought not to be a candidate and I have had no hesitation in saying always that good faith if nothing else should restrain him.

The pressure in his behalf proceeds from the patronage, present & prospective of the Interior Department and is used by Indian agents, Indian contractors, office holders & office seekers of one kind & another. The letters we see published in Iowa papers giving an account of the public demand that he should be returned to the Senate proceed from two or three clerks in his employ & are laughed at here as being most excellent jokes.

You have got a difficult task on your hands to overcome all the patronage & promises & threats & importunities of the Interior Department. About as hypercritical a pretence as I ever knew is that Mr. Harlan is indifferent on the subject & is only urged by his friends. Why he is moving Heaven & Earth & has been ever since he went into the cabinet, though he told me when, I went at his instance to urge the Presdt. to appoint him Secty. that he should support you & that his friends would do likewise, as his successor. I am *now* convinced that he only desired to go into the cabinet in order to strengthen himself for a re-election. No man regrets this *imbroglio* more than I do. I advised Harlan not to seek a place in the cabinet & told him that he could be re-elected without difficulty. He thought differently & wanted to go into the cabinet. Every man in the delegation went at his desire &

urged the Presdt. to make him Secty. of the Interior. Then it was that he wrote you the letter pledging himself to support you. I cant' account for his conduct; I only know that his violation of faith cant' justify & shant be used as justifying perfidy on my part.

Yours truly
J. W. Grimes

(Private)
Washington Dec. 24, 1867

Dr Kirkwood

Yours enclosing pension papers has come duly to hand. I will present them when Cong. again assembles & will deliver your message to Mr Van Winkle.

Dr. Saunders of Davenport started to Iowa to night as the emmissary to the Iowa candidate for the Presidency to so arrange maters as to secure the vote of our state to him. His pretentions are laughed at here for really I do not think he stands as well as he did three years ago, for his capacity as an administrator had not then been tested & he had not therefore made himself ridiculous: but I suppose he will manage to secure the vote of Iowa in the convention in order to strengthen himself for ulterior purposes. I suppose a part of the program is to see that Rich is beaten for State printer.

Yours truly
J. W. Grimes

[Copy]

. . . The Germans are the greatest soldiers & the French the greatest braggarts & lairs in the world. Do not delude yourself with the idea that there is a Republic in France or that there ever will be. Gambetta government is the purest despotism in the world, but it is the only form of government suitable to France. The people of Gascony & Lanquedoc have made no intellectual progress in the last thousand years. They are exactly what they were, though relatively not near so good & enlightened as in the time of Charles Martel. The whole Country is demoralized—there is but little virtue among

either men or women & they need a "discipline" as much as Sodom did, & they are getting it.

Mrs. Grimes & Mary desires to be kindly remembered to you & to Mrs. Pike & to all other friends who may be near you.

I have no doubt that the schooners are very fast making us both rich. I am so charmed at the probability of such a Consummation that I am not only willing but desirous to sell out my interest in them.

Poor Porter seems to have come to terrible grief. He ought & I presume does curse the man who invented writing. He will stand but a poor chance now with Grant, Butler, Banks, all of the staff & half of the line against him, & the whole partizan press who will never forgive him for unveiling their gods in such a profane manner. My address is Care of Alex. S. Petrie & Co. 11 Old Broad St. London-England.

Your friend

J. W. Grimes

Copyright of *Annals of Iowa* is the property of State of Iowa, by & through the State Historical Society of Iowa and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.